

EKKLESIA

... the body of Christ

Introduction

- Anytime there is a misunderstanding regarding the things of God—especially as it relates to essence, purpose, and the identity of the **people of God**, major problems can and will occur.
- A significant area of confusion that causes problems even to this day is the church's own understanding of itself.
- To many—even among some Christians, the **church** is nothing more than an institution, which is run by a ruling class of educated clergy or swayed and entertained by gifted and talented personalities.
- This kind of mentality or misunderstanding has created all kinds of problems within the church where the **average believer** assumes they are objects of ministry instead of being a minister in their own right as well—who grows into maturity as they serve within the body.

Five Fold Ministry

- It was he who gave some to be **apostles**, some to be **prophets**, some to be **evangelists**, and some to be **pastors** and **teachers**, to prepare God's people for **works of service**, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:11-13 NIV)
- Then we will **no longer be infants**, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. (Eph 4:11-14 NIV)
- So then, the **five-folding ministry** is not to do ministry for the saints but help the saint to do ministry, so that they can grow and no longer be immature believers.

Introduction

- So then, when we start to think of the church as an institution—run by elites, we fail to grasp one of the most important parts of our faith and that is that the church is not a building, not a place, nor a service, but the **body of Christ**, where each member has a part to play.

What is Church

- This may be a surprise to some, but the root word for the English word church is not in the Bible.
- The English word we use today as church comes from the German word **“kirche”** and the word *kirche* comes from the Greek word **“kuriakon.”**
- Kuriakon actually means **“the house of the lord”** and denotes a **place** and was first used to give designation to pagan temples and shrines.
- The word for church in the Bible is **ekklesia** and carries with it a very different meaning.
- Ekklesia doesn't mean a building but **people** who are special, hand selected and called out from the general population to provide a specific function.

Ekklesia

- To the Greeks the **ekklesia** was those highly respected citizens of a city who would be “**called out**” to meet, when there was need, to perform certain legislative duties for the city.
- These individuals were chosen (elected) primarily for their virtue, sincerity, and integrity.
- Likewise, the **Ekklesia of God** are those special chosen individuals that God has selected to perform a vital function for His kingdom.
- *You will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8 NIV)
- So then the church is made up of special selected individuals in whom God has chosen to be for Him a **witness** that Jesus is the Christ and is Lord over the earth and will be returning soon to set up his rule—and reign in true righteousness and justice.

Loss of Essence

- But, sometime during the 4th Century, the church lost its **essence** as a people and the body of Christ and became an institution.
- Not until much later during the **Reformation**, was the essence of the church rediscovered.

The Mystery of the Church

- But to tell you the truth, the **church** is something more than a movement, an assembly, or a gathering of believers in Christ.
- The church is also a **mystery**.
- It is the **mystical body of Christ**.
 - In other words, the church is a living organism that has **parts** that feel, function, and have responsibilities.
 - Hurt one of those parts and the whole body hurts.
 - Moreover, hurt the body and **Jesus** feels the pain Himself.

The Mystery of the Church

- For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not **think of yourself** more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with **sober judgment**, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ **we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others**. (Rom 12:3–5 NIV)
- Who are these verses addressed to?
- What is the problem?
- What is the solution?
- When individuals think **more of themselves** than they should, do they develop **independent** attitudes and actions or **interdependent** attitudes and actions?

Interdependency

- The **eye** cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the **head** cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be **weaker** are indispensable, ... But God has combined the members of the body ..., so that there should be **no division in the body**, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. (1 Cor 12:21-25)
- If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. (1 Cor 12:26 NIV)
- When one part of the body suffers who else suffers?

The Damascus Road

- *Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the **Lord's disciples**. (Acts 9:1a)*
- *He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in **Damascus**, so that if he found any there who belonged to **the Way**, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1b-2)*
- *As he neared **Damascus** on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "**Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?**" (Acts 9:3-4 NIV)*

Christ & Believers

- *“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “**I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,**” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” (Acts 9:5–6 NIV)*
 - No doubt this must have been a huge revelation for Saul.
 - Not only was Jesus the risen Christ and the testimony by Christians about Him were true, but by **persecuting** them he was also **persecuting** Christ.
 - So in other words, the connection between Christ and His believers is **inseparable**.
- This is why the Scripture says, *‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the **least** of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’* (Matt 25:40 NIV)

Christ & Believers

- “He who receives **you** receives **me**, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.” (Matt 10:40 NIV)
- “And whoever welcomes a **little child** like this in my name welcomes **me**.” (Matt 18:5 NIV)
- “He who listens to **you** listens to **me**; he who rejects **you** rejects **me**; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” (Luke 10:16 NIV)
- When **you** sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you **sin** against Christ. (1 Cor 8:12 NIV)

Commentary

- When someone harms a **member** of the body of Christ, not only does that harm the church, **Jesus feels it**.
- In the same way, when someone harms the **church**, where many feel it, **Jesus feels it too**.
- Moreover, when a **believers** treats the body of Christ with contempt, they not only weaken the church, but show contempt for **Jesus** and get his attention as well.
- In other words, we can worship the Lord with our **lips**, but act so independent and selfish, we **defile** our worship by our attitude and actions.

Utilitarianism

- **Utilitarianism** is a philosophy that says, “**the greatest amount of good for the greatest number.**”
- For years this philosophy was promoted by liberal churches around the world and wasn't necessarily a bad thing.
- However today, **Utilitarianism** has become totally corrupted by secular society and modern consumerism, where the greater good is not what helps the most people, but instead what helps me the most.
- This corrupted idea not only **destroys** relationships, marriages, families, but also churches and our relationship with Christ as well.
- It use to be that people understood that they reap when they first sow. However, it seems today that some people are looking to reap where they haven't sowed.

Summary

- When we give the **church** our best, it is an act of worship unto the Lord.
- When we use our **gifts, talents, and callings** to serve others—(not worrying who will get the credit), we are worshiping the Lord in spirit and in truth.
- When we are **faithful** to the body of Christ and show up on time and don't allow silly excuses to stop our **participation**, **we do what is right** and become **a source of great encouragement** to the whole body.

Conclusion

- To the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul rebukes them on the way they are treated each other.
- He tells them, . . . whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against **the body and blood of the Lord**. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing **the body of the Lord** eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1 Cor 11:27–29 NIV)
- In other words, Paul is telling this church that when they partake of Communion and show indifference toward the **body of Christ** they are acting hypocritically and place themselves in a bad situation.
- Consequently, if we **show faithfulness** to the body of Christ and **love** and **support** the purpose and function of the Church, we as a **fellowship** will not doubt become that city on a hill that brings light to all men. Amen!

Communion

